

Newsline

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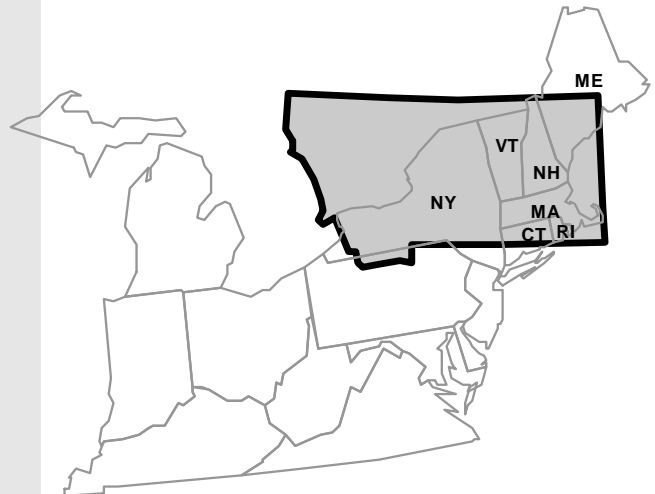
January 1998

Montana's transportation system is critical to the economic and social well-being of Montana residents.

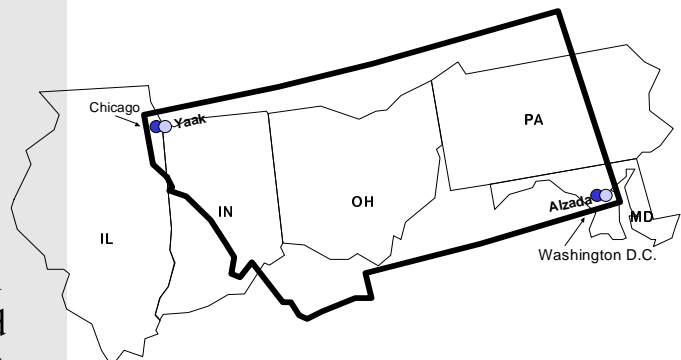
Our transportation system connects our communities and businesses with each other and the world and carries our products to national and international markets.

As a large, sparsely populated state with an extensive transportation system, Montana faces many challenges in funding the maintenance and improvement of this system. The maps and charts on the next two pages illustrate some of these challenges and the importance of Federal funding to Montana.

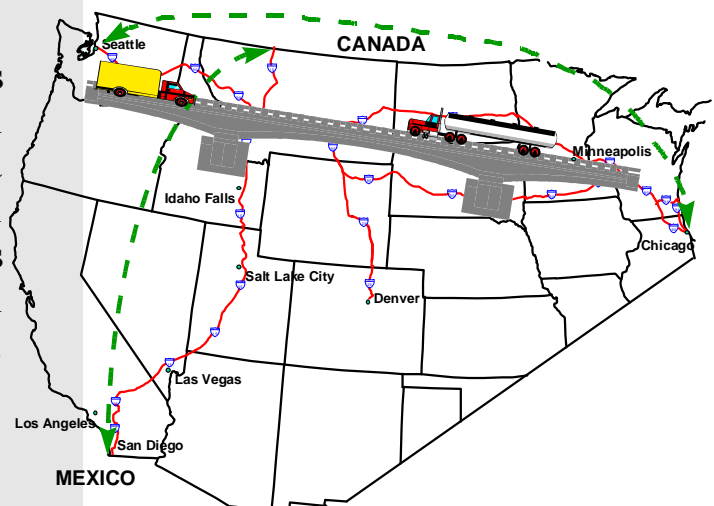
Montana is larger than 7 Northeast states, yet has only 2.5% of the combined population of those states.



The distance by highway between Yaak and Alzada is greater than the distance between Chicago and Washington D.C.



Montana's transportation system serves as a crucial bridge in the nation's transportation system.



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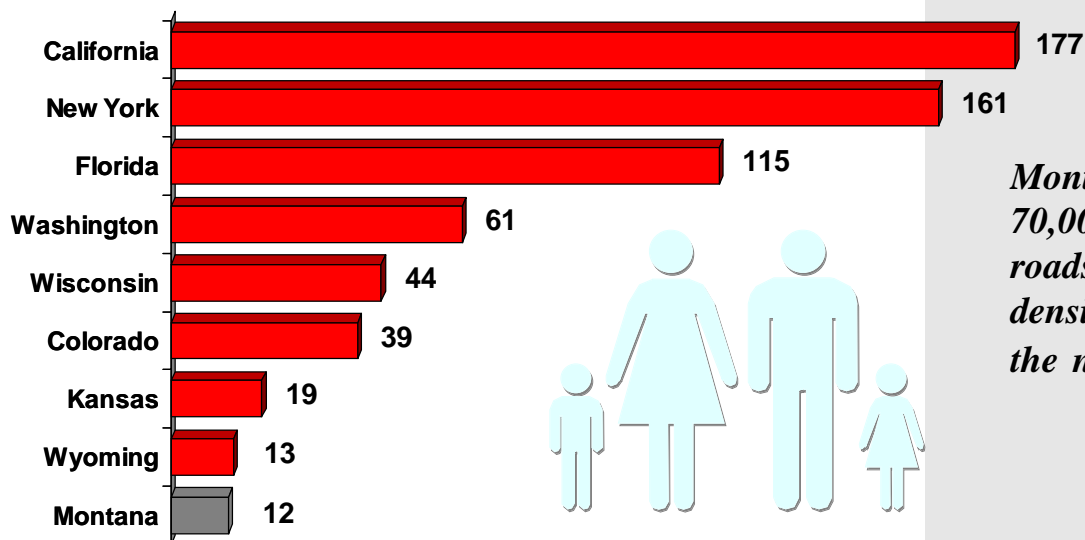
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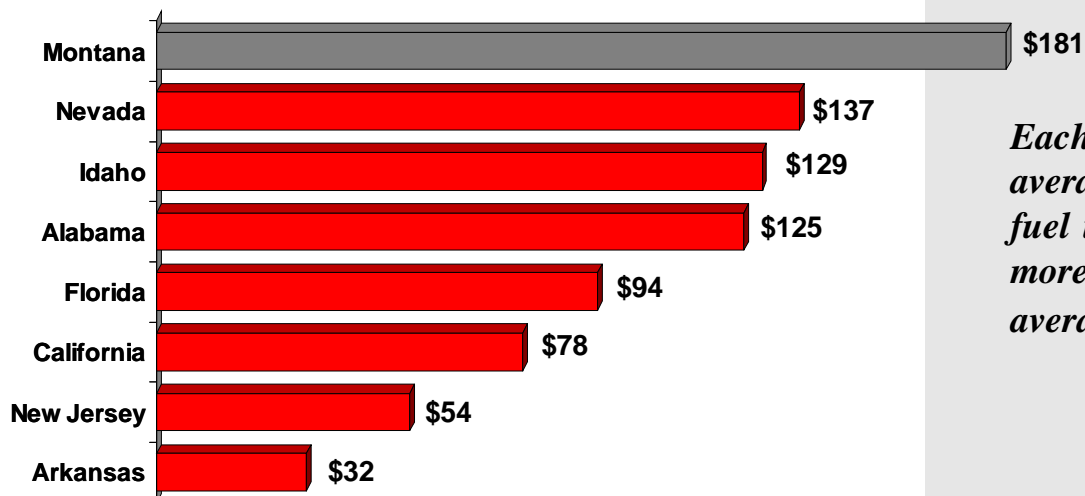
Special Insert
Montana Rest Area Map

Residents Per Mile of Public Road



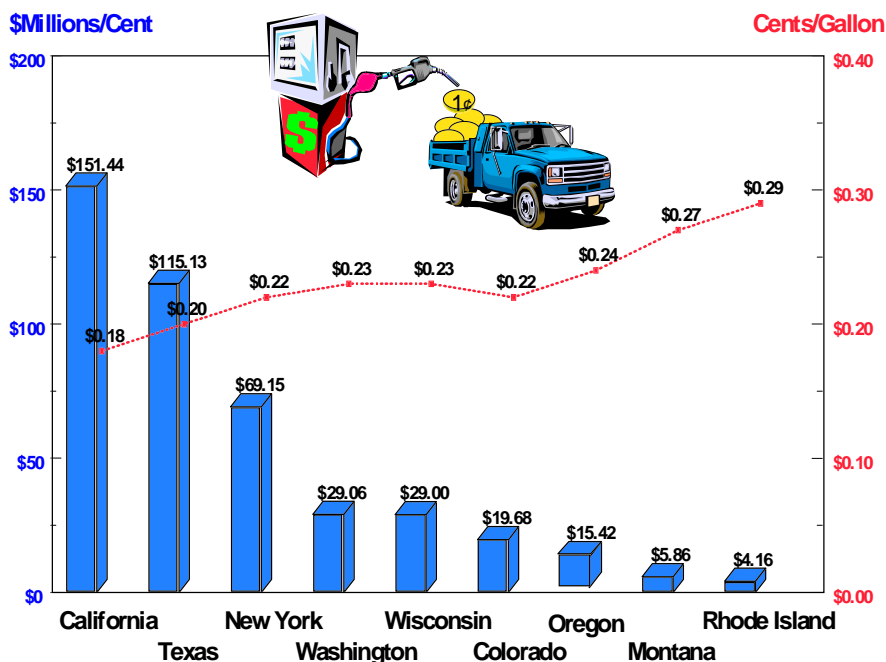
Montana has nearly 70,000 miles of public roads and a population density less than 10% of the national average.

1995 Per Capita State Motor Fuel Tax Contribution



Each Montanan paid an average of \$181 in State fuel taxes in 1995 - \$70 more than the nation's average of \$111.

Annual Funds Raised with One Cent of State Gas Tax



Even with one of the nation's highest gas taxes, Montana raises only a small portion of what is required to support our vast highway system.

As discussed in the last several issues of *NEWSLINE*, the reauthorization of the federal transportation program continues to be a hot topic for Montana.

Reauthorization, which generally happens every six years, is the program which controls how much federal-aid transportation money each state receives, what those funds can be spent on, under which regulations, and how much state match is required.

Reauthorization debates started in earnest in early **1997** and revolved around two issues: how much of the highway trust fund would be available for the program, and how these funds would be distributed between the states. To a lesser degree, the debates also concern who has authority over the program and its regulatory structure.

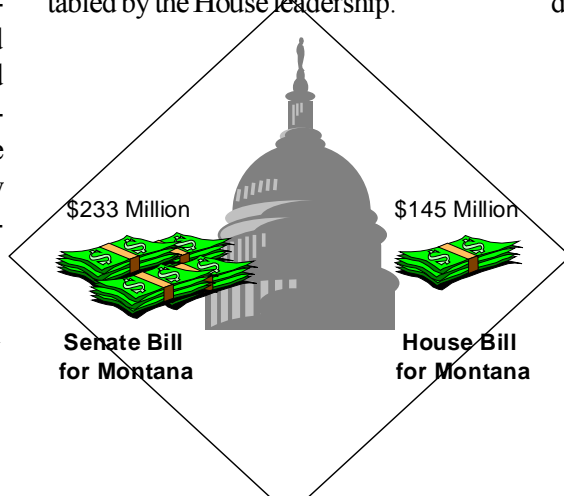
MDT has worked very closely with Montana's Congressional Delegation for well over a year on the topic. In addition, the Department works in close association with a coalition of the surrounding states to advance a national transportation policy favorable to the region and each of the states. MDT also provided significant technical support in developing a reauthorization bill introduced in April named **STARS 2000**. The **STARS** bill recognized western and rural characteristics in the formula distribution such as: full extent of the highway system, no over emphasis of population factors, and adjustments for low population density.

The other two Senate bills were **ISTEA Works** and **STEP 21**. **ISTEA Works** continued the historic orientation of the program toward the Northeast states while **STEP 21** favored sunbelt donor states.

Eventually, within the Environmental and Public Works Committee leadership, a compromise Senate bill emerged -- **ISTEA II**. This committee bill contains many of the provisions first introduced in **STARS**. Montana's percentage of program share

in this bill is **1.06%**, versus a six year average under **ISTEA** of **.92%** and the percentage in **STARS** of **1.11%**. All the Senate work took place under the limit of the balanced budget agreement. Still, this allows for program growth from **\$18.5** to **\$21.5** billion annually, which would increase Montana's share from about **\$165** million to **\$233** million.

On the House side there was only one approach: that of Congressman Bud Shuster of Pennsylvania. His bill broke the balanced budget agreement and was essentially tabled by the House leadership.



This bill (**BESTE**A) devastates the west. In the first year, Montana's funding would drop to **\$145** million (from **\$165**), and our overall share would plunge to **.68%**.

When it became clear **BESTE**A would not move because of its budget busting aspect, the House advanced a six month bill to allow for another chance to press for higher budget numbers in next Spring's budget resolution. This bill would have given Montana **.78%** program share - still significantly below either the **ISTEA** average or the share in the Senate 6-year bill.

By mid-October there was still hope the Senate would act on its bill before recess. At that time, the most contentious amendment that was advanced was the Byrd-Gramm-Warner-Baucus amendment which would earmark part of future budget authority if savings were identified in **1998**. This could have effectively opened

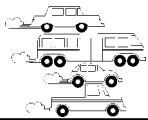
the door to a larger program without busting the balanced budget agreement. Unfortunately, the entire Senate debate became involved with the partisan issue of campaign finance reform and was pulled from further discussion by Senator Lott of Mississippi.

Faced with a bad short term House bill and no chance for Senate action on a six year bill, we were concerned with two issues: that highway construction would face an interruption in early **1998**, and a short term solution could prejudice the future multi-year debates against the Senate formula approach.

In October Congress passed a short term bill that allows for the continuation of our construction program at least through May in a way that doesn't adopt the House approach to formulas. This bill provides Montana with **\$88** million which must be obligated by May **1**. This is slightly more funding than the state had available in the first six months of **1997**, and the approach can't be the basis of a multi-year formula.

Senator Lott has committed to make the Reauthorization bill (**S 1173**) the first order of business in January. The Byrd-Gramm-Warner-Baucus amendment has nearly **50** co-sponsors including Senator Burns and has a good chance of passing. Congressman Shuster has said he won't take up the Reauthorization bill until after the Budget Resolution in April or May. If the House schedule remains unchanged the program could be disrupted in June or July.

Montana's delegation continues to work very aggressively on the state's behalf. But, overall, the House bill is extremely bad for the west as it emphasizes things we don't have such as: population, trust fund contributions, and urban vehicle mileage traveled. The Senate bill on the other hand is extremely favorable and we continue to do everything we can to support it.



MDT Planning Division Updates



MR TMA VANPOOL BEGINS ON HIGHWAY 93

The first organized public vanpool in the state has become a popular idea - so much so that 95 people are on a waiting list for a ride! The vanpool is part of a series of projects being conducted by the Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MR TMA) to reduce the number of single occupant vehicles (SOV) commuting along the U.S. Highway 93 corridor between Hamilton and Missoula.

Van operations commenced the first week of August with a single 15 passenger van and the "fleet" doubled in size two months later with a van donated by St. Patrick Hospital. Both vans are full according to Noel Larrivee, MR TMA Executive Director.

"This is a perfect example that if you provide people with transportation alternatives they will respond" Larrivee said. Given the distances the vanpool participants have to commute, there will be a reduction of 156,000 miles of SOV miles traveled each year for the 15 passenger van, Larrivee noted.

Individuals are picked up at park and ride sites near their hometowns, dropped off and picked up at their work site, and returned to the park and ride at the end of their work-day.

MR TMA has also initiated a "Guaranteed Ride Home" program. Persons registered in MR TMA's carpool or vanpool database are guaranteed a free ride home in case of an emergency. MR TMA has contracted with Yellow Cab to provide this service from work site to home.

MR TMA is funded with a grant from MDT and is the first "rural" transportation management association in the United States. Local contributors include the City and County of Missoula; University of Montana; St. Patrick Hospital; Marcus Daly Hospital; Ravalli County and the Fanwood Foundation.

For more information about the vanpooling program or MR TMA contact Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association at 1-888-375-0880, or visit their website at www.mrtma.org.

1997 MONTANA RAIL PLAN AMENDMENT COMPLETED

Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) recently completed the 1997 Montana State Rail Plan Amendment for MDT. The Amendment contains data on the composition and use of the state-wide rail system, and also addresses two projects proposed for federal funding under the Local Rail Freight Assistance (LRFA) Program. The projects are a new spur line to access a warehouse in the South Industrial Park at Shelby, and a rehabilitation project on Dakota Missouri Valley & Western (DMVW) Railroad's Whitetail Line in northeastern Montana. Following its project analyses, WSA determined the rail rehabilitation project met the LRFA funding criteria, but the spur line construction project at Shelby did not.

MDT will now apply for Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) approval to fund up to 70% of the actual project cost. If FRA approves, MDT will begin negotiations with DMVW to undertake the work. The project involves limited tie-replacement on a 21-mile segment of track between Dooley and Outlook at an estimated total project cost of \$633,000. If an agreement can be reached with DMVW, work will begin this spring.

For more information or to request a copy of the Amendment, call Jan Vogel at 444-4262.



New Publications Available

1997 Transportation Stakeholder Survey Report

This report is a critical part of MDT's TranPlan 21 public involvement process and is the result of a recent survey taken which examines the various transportation stakeholder groups' perceptions of Montana's transportation system.

Revised Guide to Public Involvement

A guide to various public involvement processes within MDT's Planning Division.

Montana's Take-Along Winter Survival Handbook

A handbook of basic survival for Montana's extreme winter conditions.

Call 1-800-714-7296 to request copies of these publications.



MDT Planning Division Updates



Montana Community Transportation Enhancement Program *Progress Report As of December 1997*

Currently, 268 CTEP projects are under development or completed. Local governments have obligated \$22 million of their available funds toward projects. MDT has reimbursed \$5.78 million for work completed.

The following is a summary of projects within each phase of the CTEP process:

- Phase I:** 14 projects are undergoing initial MDT review.
- Phase II:** 19 projects are currently in the Agreement Development Process.
- Phase III:** 116 projects are in the Project Development Process.
- Phase IV:** 67 Projects are in the Ad/Award & Construction Stage.
- Phase V:** 52 Projects are Substantially Completed or Completed.

For further CTEP project information contact:

Mike Davis (406)444-4383 E-Mail U1972@long.mdt.mt.gov or
Ed Hedlund (406)444-0809 E-Mail U3589@long.mdt.mt.gov

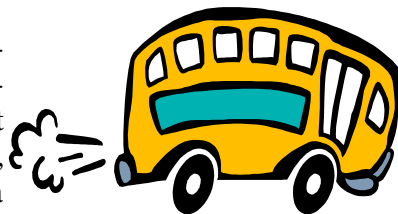
Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call **1-800-714-7296** (in Montana only), or **(406) 444-3423. TDD** (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592

Administrator (Patricia Saindon)	444-3143
Bike/Pedestrian	
(Jennifer Dalrymple)	444-9273
CTEP (Mike Davis)	444-4383
Mapping (Jim Erickson)	444-6119
Multimodal Planning	
(John Craig)	444-6370
Projects (Jeff Ebert)	444-7639
Public Involvement (Dave Dreher)	444-6245
Rail Planning (Jan Vogel)	444-4262
Safety Programs (Drug/Alcohol, Occupant Protection)	
(Priscilla Sinclair)	444-7417
Secondary Roads(Gary Larson)	444-6110
Statistics (Rick Rogne)	444-6111
Traffic Safety (Albert Goke)	444-7301
Traffic Statistics (Dan Bisom)	444-6122
Transit (Janis Winston)	444-4210
Urban Planning (Ross Tervo)	444-3445
ITS Planning (Dennis Hult)	444-9237
Newsline Editor (Sally Yarnall)	444-3475
Newsline Distribution	
(Joan Scott)	444-7239

RECORD NUMBER OF TRANSIT VEHICLES PURCHASED

With funds from the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration and the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, MDT's Transit Section purchased a record 24 new vehicles for transit providers across Montana for fiscal year 1997.



The total cost of the 24 new vehicles is \$918,778. Federal funds cover 80% of the cost with the remaining 20% the responsibility of the local agency. Of the 24 vehicles, 16 are mini-buses, three are conversion vans and four are conventional vans. Three of the new vehicles are going to agencies which have never received transit funding through MDT, the remainder are either replacement or expansion vehicles.

Providers receiving new vehicles are located in Billings, Bozeman, Lewistown, Sidney, Glasgow, Great Falls, Choteau, Wibaux, Miles City, Butte, Anaconda, Missoula, Hamilton, Troy and Helena.



New Air Quality Standards Announced

In June of 1997, President Clinton announced the final decision on new air quality standards for both ozone and fine particulate matter. The decision represents a tightening of the existing standard for ground level ozone and the creation of a new standard for fine particulate matter. These changes in standards for transportation related pollutants will have varying impacts on MDT and other State & local agencies working to improve Montana's air quality.

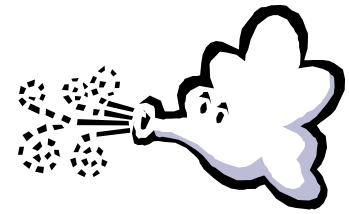
Under the current National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone (O_3), all areas monitored for ozone in Montana are considered clean. Based on the most recent air quality data (1994-1996) for Montana, the new ozone standards should not bring any area of the state into nonattainment¹ status.

PM_{10} is particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less. Medical data suggests it is this "fine fraction" of particulate matter that becomes deeply imbedded in human lung tissue and causes respiratory problems and exacerbates other cardiovascular diseases. PM_{10} exceedances in Montana are primarily a winter problem, when road dust and wood smoke are trapped in valleys by strong temperature inversions. Under the current NAAQS for PM_{10} , Montana has 10 desig-

nated nonattainment areas. However, all of the nonattainment areas are now in compliance with federal standards.

The new PM_{10} standards are less stringent than the previous PM_{10} standards and would not have triggered a violation for many of Montana's currently designated nonattainment areas. The graph below shows Montana's PM_{10} nonattainment areas and the number of years these areas have been in compliance.

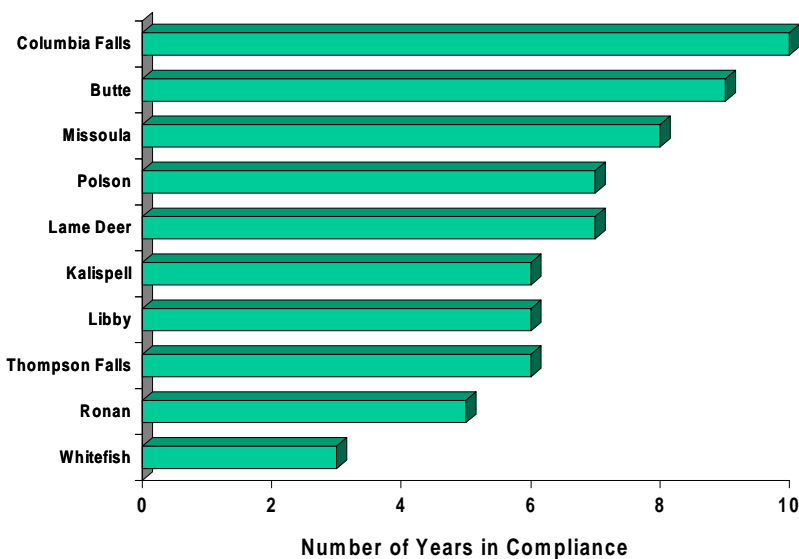
In addition to the new PM_{10} standards, the revised air quality standards include provisions for $PM_{2.5}$ (particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to a nominal 2.5 micrometers). It is difficult to determine which areas of Montana might be in nonattainment for the new fine particulate standard since no $PM_{2.5}$ data for Montana is available. Field measurements will be needed to determine which areas, if any, are not complying with the new standard. The designation process for $PM_{2.5}$ will not occur until after states have had sufficient time to estab-



lish field sites for collecting three years of $PM_{2.5}$ data.

Montana's air, like most of the nation's, is getting cleaner. Much of the progress is the result of a nationwide commitment to cleaner air, including the expenditure of billions of dollars annually on improved petroleum fuels, automobile engines and pollution control technology. Unhealthy levels of air pollution in Montana have seen a radical decline over the past several years and may well be a memory within the next 10 to 15 years.

Montana's PM_{10} Nonattainment Areas



Winter Road Maintenance and its Effect on Air Quality

Airborne dust is a serious health concern. Highway sanding materials contribute to the problem when they are crushed by traffic and become airborne.

Liquid de-icers are an effective tool in reducing the amount of airborne dust. In fact, this approach to snow and ice control is rapidly gaining acceptance and is often the preferred method with MDT use increasing to over 2 million gallons last year.

MDT uses corrosive inhibited liquid magnesium chloride (mag-chloride) that is safe for the environment and less harmful to vehicles than other snow control methods such as salt or sand. The US Army Corps of Engineers has done comprehensive testing which shows normal application of mag-chloride has no negative impacts on ground water, the water table, or vegetation. The US Forest Service uses mag-chloride at a rate many times greater for summer dust control on gravel roads with no adverse impacts.

MDT and other road maintenance agencies use liquid de-icers for:

Anti-icing: Light application of liquid de-icer to a bare road to prevent the formation of a hard bond of ice and reduce the buildup of snow.

De-icing: Application of a liquid de-icer to remove an existing layer of snowpack or ice on the road.

Pre-wetting: The wetting of sanding material with a liquid de-icer which causes sand to stick to snowpack on the road rather than pushed to the shoulder.

¹ Areas with persistent air quality problems have been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as nonattainment areas. A nonattainment area retains that designation until a formal EPA redesignation process is completed. A state's environmental agency must outline the pollution prevention measures that will be used to maintain air quality standards for 10 years after redesignation.

NHI BICYCLE / PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCOMMODATION TRAINING COURSE A BIG SUCCESS

MDT's Planning Division sponsored the National Highway Institute Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Accommodation Training Course October 21-23. The 45 participants included engineers, safety specialists, local citizens, bicycle and pedestrian coalition/advocacy members, consultants and a

county highway commissioner from Boise, Idaho. The course was designed to increase awareness of the importance of integrating pedestrian and bicyclist considerations in planning, design, operations, enforcement and education programs.

In one activity blindfolded participants walked with canes and a spotter around the MDT building to experience the challenges faced by the visually impaired. Participants also navigated around and through the building in a wheelchair. Everyone gained invaluable insight into the daily frustrations of travel experienced by persons with disabilities. Our thanks to Apex Medical supply for providing necessary equipment.



Damschen and Associates presented a local Helena Bicycle/Pedestrian Project as a case study. Participants visited the project site and discussed project design issues such as; wetlands, railroad crossings, drainage, utility conflicts. Based on course guidance they identified several concerns which led to reevaluation of the planned design and routing for the path. Many thanks to Dan McCauley and Craig Pozega for their intriguing presentation.

For more information about the NHI Course or to obtain a list of attendees, please contact Jennifer Dalrymple, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at (406)444-9273.

Transportation Tidbits! Did you know?....

✧ Flathead county has the most public road mileage of any county in Montana with 2,753 miles. Treasure county has the least with 316 miles.

✧ Billings has the most public road mileage of any city in Montana with 431 miles. Rexford has the least with 1.4 miles.

✧ MDT weighed 888,833 trucks throughout the state in 1996.

✧ In 1997, MDT crews:

- plowed 3,791,341 miles of highway which is equivalent to 8 round trips to the moon.

- applied 2,345,798 gallons of liquid deicer on the state's highways.

- deposited nearly 379,181 dump truck loads of sand.

✧ Montana's first Highway Commission was created in 1913. It was composed of three members and had a yearly budget of \$5,000. At that time, prison inmates constructed roads.

✧ Over 82% of all manufactured goods are moved in and out of Montana by truck.

MDT Upcoming Events....

Transportation Commission Meetings

January 14 & 15 - Kalispell
March 11 & 12 - Great Falls
April 29 & 30 - Helena

Statewide DUI Taskforce Meeting

January 16 - Helena

Child Occupant Protection Training

February 12 & 13 - Missoula

Child Occupant Protection Technical Training

March 9-13 - Billings

Bi-Annual ACT Training

May 27-29 - Helena

Drug Awareness Course

June 15 & 16 - Great Falls
June 18 & 19 - Billings

For More Information on Any of These Events
Call 1-800-714-7296

Since you asked.....

Beginning with this issue of *Newsline*, we will address questions from our readers and the general public regarding MDT programs. This issue focuses on winter closures of rest areas.

According to a recent public telephone survey, Montana residents would like to see MDT provide year-round access to more rest areas. While MDT recognizes the convenience and safety provided by year-round access, it's difficult to keep rest areas open because:

- Traffic declines dramatically during the winter, thus fewer people are using rest areas.
- Maintenance and utility costs increase dramatically during the winter.
- MDT's number one winter maintenance priority is keeping our highways free of ice and snow. Rest area maintenance diverts scarce resources from these efforts.
- Many rest areas are not designed for year-round use and would require expensive plumbing and insulation upgrades for winter use.

Although MDT isn't planning major changes in rest area maintenance practices, the department's newest rest areas are designed for year-round use if resources allow and traffic levels justify the additional maintenance expense.

Montana Department of Transportation Transportation Planning Division

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